(c) the reasons for recurrence of such incidents;

(d) the steps Government have taken to prevent such ghastly incidents in Jammu and Kashmir;

(e) whether Government propose to hand over the troubled areas completely to the army; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) Militancy related incidents in J&K, aiming at soft targets like innocent and unarmed villagers have taken place during the last six months. During the year, 438 civilians have been killed till 30.6.98. Some of the major incidents perpetrated by the militants recently include killing of 23 persons in Wandhama village (Srinagar) on January 25/26, 1998, killing of 26 persons at Parankot — Dhakikote villages (Udhampur Distt.) on 17/18 April 1998, killing of 9 persons in Doda and 4 persons in Surankot (Poonch Distt.) between May 4 and 6, 1998, and killing of 25 persons of marriage parties in Champnari village (Doda) on 19 June 1998. The aim of the militants is to strike soft targets by cowardly and sneak attacks in a bid to terrorise the people and vitiate the environment.

(d) Intensive anti-militancy operations are being undertaken. The security forces/State Police have been redeployed at the strategic places to instil confidence in the people in the vulnerable areas. Close vigil is also being kept by the security forces along the border/LOC and in the interior areas.

(e) and (f) Army is operating in the counter-insurgency operations in J&K under the overall directions of the State Government/Unified HQrs.

Freedom Fighter's Pension

3895. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether applications for pension to freedom fighters from Maharashtra are still pending with Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons for their pendency; and

(d) by when all the freedom fighters from the State will be granted pension?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) No fresh application for grant of freedom fighters pension pertaining to the State of Maharashtra is pending with the Government as on date.

(b) to (d) In view of reply to (a) above the Question does not arise.

Central Team for West Bengal

3896. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of West Bengal objected for sending the three member team by the Central Government to assess the law and order situation in the State;

(b) what were the reasons given by the West Bengal Government and the Chief Minister of West Bengal in this regard; and

(c) the reaction of Government to the objections raised by Government of West Bengal and Chief Minister of West Bengal?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) Reservations were expressed by some political leaders, particularly from West Bengal, about the constitutionality of sending Central Teams to the States to assess the law and order situation.